



# THE RAIL TRAM & BUS UNION

## Regional Sub Branch Office

RAILWAY STATION, LYDIARD ST, BALLARAT, VIC 3350  
Telephone: 53 378 520  
(Int: 28 521) .  
Fax: 53378521 (Int : 28 52.)

19-05-09

**The Secretary**  
**Select Committee, Train Services**  
**Parliament of Victoria**  
**Spring St, Melbourne. 3002.**

Dear Sir

I would like to respond to your request in regard to the factors involved in delays to V /line train services. I also include for your edification, and perusal comments made by me to the State Secretary of this union, three years ago which I think still have a degree of relevance to the matter at hand.

In terms of giving reasons for some of the problems relating to train. delays. I will contain my remarks to the area that I have responsibility for in the unions membership, that is in the operational areas. Members covered are in signalling, shunting, on train, and station staff.

One of the biggest problems associated with the operation of the system as current, is the massive increase in patronage and close timetabling of services to encourage this growth. Whilst the massive growth in patronage looks good from the position of promoting the system, staff growth is not reflected in this. picture. Our members are left to deal with all sorts of problems left behind in the rush to achieve this outcome. Lack of staff (including drivers) results in service cancellations on a regular basis which drives passengers onto road coach replacements. Ibis causes delays, confusion, and much ill feeling (usually directed at our members).

The booking offices at most of the major stations ( and a significant number of minor stations) are woefully understaffed and result in trains being delayed to allow passengers to purchase tickets.( for example the main station at Geelong until recently would close to an ticket sales at 08.30pm) The purchasing of tickets on trains is complicated by a lack of resources directed to train conductors who have to rely on cash only sales and hand writing of tickets. In some circumstances conductors have been forced to leave trains en route, to cash \$50.00 or \$100.00 notes at stations because they do not have enough change provided to them by conservative policies. In order to process this the train is delayed.

Delays to trains in traffic from unruly, recalcitrant, or fare evading passengers is a continuing problem as is the lack of a proper resolution to it. Train conductors have **no power** to deal with these persons and have to rely on outside controls such as the police or unmanned authorized officers. The problem with this is that the conductor has to radio or telephone for assistance and in some cases this may be a long time in coming. Recently one of our members was dealing with a fare evader on a Geelong train and required the police to remove the offender from the train. The train sat at Werribee for 30 minutes and the police still did not turn. up. The police were called to attend at North Shore and still did not turn up, further delay. When the train arrived at Geelong the offender walked from the train with no penalty. Also as recent as the date of this correspondence, a conductor and driver were assaulted on a

Traralgon train, which resulted in both a delay to the service and later the service being totally cancelled. It appears that no one is interested in providing a solution as to how these types of delays may be mitigated.

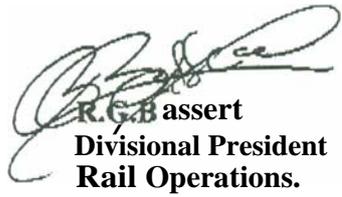
I would be of the opinion that if the focus of the organization was on providing a reliable and regularly on time performance, then committed action would be taken deal with these problems. However nothing changes!.

Associated with these matters is the control of the general public who bring all sorts of items onto trains causing issues with the loading and safe storage on trains. Once again the lack of proper powers afforded to staff cause the issues to be directed to police or authorized officers. In one circumstance a Ballarat bound train was delayed at Sunshine station for over 40 mins when a passenger attempted to board the train with a petrol driven whipper snipper. The conductor asked the passenger to remove himself with his implement (all they can do legally), the passenger refused to comply and the police had to attend to remove him. The result was severe dislocation of train crossing arrangements on the Ballarat corridor which results in a ~"knock on" effect of delays to other services. The lack of proper control of bicycles, prams, pushers, large items of luggage all impact on time spent at stations for passengers to board and alight The rolling stock is not designed for easy stowage of items and on crowded trains particular attention has to be paid by conductors, to keeping prams, pushers and bicycles 'from obstructing doorways and staff access areas In trying to make an effort to control this V /Line management have all sorts of instructions which given the nature of the way the system operates, are impossible to comply with .. ID this regard I mean the lack of staff, unmanned stations, no proper co-ordination of staff, and a lack of proper Impetus to deal effectively with the problems.

In order to be able to run a single line railway(such as the Ballarat line) to tight timetable requirements, attention needs to be paid to the small details which end up as big problems if they are not effectively managed. It is no good just expecting that because you have a timetable all the trains will run religiously to it. A lot of work has to be put into it to achieving that outcome on a daily basis, This would mean that a lot of hard decisions would have to be made in. order to deliver the outcomes of on time running. This would have to include taking more control of station environs where passengers are given latitude to delay trains by their tardiness in purchasing tickets or just generally arriving late for the departures. A comprehensive review of the operation of V /Line station procedures should be undertaken, along with a review of the on train operations. it would be obvious from the state of the way the V/Line operates, that significant improvement can be achieved by making timely improvements to its **operational** area given the huge sums of money invested in the track and train infrastructure.

There are also significant issues for our members in the number of trains that suffer breakdowns in traffic and because of the degree of commitment to the provision of multiple services, delays that ensue. Problems prevalent are door failures and could relate to the age and extensive use of rolling stock. Other issues are numbers of railcars removed from traffic for maintenance problems resulting in reductions of capacity on. peak services. This creates delays and problems locating alternative road coach transport. Passengers are reluctant to travel on replacement road services which leads to overcrowding on these services which develop further delays at intermediate stations unloading excessive passenger loadings.

It appears that we have reached a particular point in V/Line where a major change is required to achieve some proper continuance of the investment so far placed into it. Like the old saying of "Spoiling the ship for a halfpenny's worth of tar" a few worthwhile adjustments could deliver some beneficial outcomes .. Someone needs to decide that we are either just going to run trains or run trains that run to time.



**R.G. Bassert**  
**Divisional President**  
**Rail Operations.**



# THE RAIL, TRAM & BUS UNION

## Western/Northern Regions

Sub Branch Office, Railway Station,

Lydiard St, Ballarat. 3350. Vic.

Telephone : (03) 53 378520 (int) 28520

Fax : (03) 53 378521 (int) 28521

**18-09-06**

**Mr Trevor Dobbyn**  
**State Secretary**  
**R.T.B.V.**  
**Capel St, Melbourne.**

**Dear Trevor**

I have been asked by some of our members to respond to your recent article in the union newsletter, regarding the "Fast Rail project" As I have made my position clear to you on previous occasions, I have no objections to money being spent in the rail industry to the benefit of this union and its members, but there are issues with how the money is currently being spent on this project and what its long term effects will be. I will therefore set out some issues for you to ponder on!

### **Southern Cross Station**

A new station is great and the facilities for the staff are an improvement. However the steps, stairs, lifts, and escalators replacing the previous subway system is a bad mistake.

Previously the subway extended under Spencer St to the opposite side of the road, allowing passengers unfettered access to the station. This is now closed and passenger's have to "stack up" at the Collins and Bourke st corners to wait for the traffic lights to change. The passenger waiting facilities are definitely downgraded from the previous station and are now two holes in the wall on the southern end. The actual railway station is a long way short of the original building and its associated complex. This station was built in 1962 and featured all the station operation in its air conditioned interior. The new station despite its all over roof is either cold or hot, and very noisy due to the diesel trains in its interior. A significant part of the new station is also going to be composed of shops lending comparison to a "K Mart" type environment. Although these issues present problems the station on balance is not all that bad. The biggest problem is that, although the station has been rebuilt, none of the railway infrastructure feeding it has. The station yard and its approach tracks have never been altered significantly since 1958. Spencer St No I Signal box dates from the 1890s. Because of the platform arrangements, trains have to "stacked up" on platforms in sequence of their departures. Any delays or late running will cause big problems. Also because of the introduction of the new railcars there is now not enough siding space and trains have to be run to the arrival yard for storage during the day.

Despite the recent inclusion of two sets of crossovers on the down main suburban lines at Franklin st, this area is a notorious bottleneck for trains leaving and arriving Spencer St as it is the junction for all V (Line trains to path the suburban tracks. Quite often trains will arrive or depart on time only to be blocked for up to five minutes at this location. This arrangement is still the same as it has been for the last 70 years.

## **Ballarat Line**

Much has been made of the improvements to the Ballarat line which features the hugely expensive deviation from Millbrook to Torpys road (\$45~000,000) This was done to facilitate a time saving of 5 mins in the running time of the fast train service. All the track improvements were carried out with one objective, that is to allow one service to negotiate the distance from Ballarat to Sunshine in 45 mins. This would explain why two sections of track from Bacchus Marsh to the Horseshoe bend and from the Horseshoe bend to Ingliston were not even touched and left with the original wooden sleepers and worn out rail There was no speed gain on this section of track because it was too costly to upgrade. The total length of these two sections is around 15 -20 kms. A further 2 km section of track exists on the approach to Ballarat where the concrete sleepered new track finishes at Stawell st and passengers are treated the last bit of their journey on this rough old section. The reason for this? No speed gain on this piece of line so leave it. All crossing loops were left in situ ( except for Bungaree) and were extended for run off purposes at Bank box, Parwan, and Rockbank, using mostly second hand plant ie rails and sleepers. The track around through Bungaree (the original line) has been made into a ridiculously long crossing loop (over 7kms) purely to save the cost of constructing a new loop on the deviation track. Because the Ballarat line is single track throughout any late running will compound right down the line causing delays to all trains because of the poor siting of the crossing loops. The incompetent arrangements at Bacchus Marsh are a prime example. Rather than reworking the station (which has significant commuter traffic) to an island platform, the station still has only a single platform face which seriously inhibits crossing trains. In fact it is the only station on the line with a single platform face and over 70% of the patronage on this line occurs out to Bacchus Marsh.

## **Bendigo Line**

The original line to Bendigo was built to lavish standards in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was double track throughout. The fast rail project has singled the line past Kyneton, presumably to enable Bendigo passengers to experience the joys of single line railway working using crossing loops. The truth is however that it was singled. to allow the running of one train at 160 kph. Double track exists to Kyneton, however only one track has been upgraded to allow the 160kph running the other line is wooden sleepers and the old rail. The original safeworking system of Double Line block has been replaced on the single line section with light signals and axle counters. Rather than properly track circuit the system and work it under A.T-e like the Ballarat corridor, they opted for the cheap alternative which is giving major problems. It is so bad that Batchelor has been questioned in Parliament as to when it is going to be fixed. Bendigo rail users are hopping mad that they could have had a perfectly reliable rail service with an upgraded double line and a 21<sup>st</sup> century signaling system for a fraction of the cost of the existing shambles.

## **Symour line (& Albury Corridor)**

There is nothing of significance to report on this corridor except the Craighburn electrification project. The line still is in its original configuration with some of our members working in museum piece stations. Sometimes tourists from overseas come

to visit the stations at Donnybrook, Wallan, and Kilmore East to witness the operation of the Dickensian railway safeworking equipment.

### **Gcclone line**

Work on the fast rail project entailed the upgrade of **one line** between Werribee and Corio and replacement of most of the fixed signals in that section. The Geelong line is Double track throughout but is subject to interface with the suburban system fTom Werribee to the city

### **Ea.stern Line**

The work on this line is still not completed and will not deliver significant results because of the suburban interface at Dandenong. Most of the upgrades to the track arc patchy and applied only where there are time savings for the 160kph running. There arc no significant upgrades to stations with only a tiny percentage of the many stations on this line manned at all.

### **Rolling Stock**

Despite the building of the 38 new railcars all the existing other rolling stock will remain in service. This includes ;-

H sets - rebuilt Hams trains from 1955

S&Z carriages built in the late 1940s and 1950s N sets - built in 1980~81

Sprinter railcars - built 1994

Other including engines

P Class - rebuilds of engines built in 1955

A Class - rebuilds of engines built in 1952

Y Class - Built using S/H equipment 1963

N Class - Built 1983

V/Line is an operating anachronism given its reliance on the loco hauled rolling stock and no other state railway in Australia uses this method any longer. Certainly it would be considered archaic in most of the developed countries in Europe.

### **The Governments "Biggest upgrade in 120 years claim"**

In 1950 the state government embarked on a rehabilitation of the railway system, worn down by the war years. This involved the following:-

Expenditure of £80,000,000 for rolling stock and major works.

26 main line iesellocomotives 1500 hp

25 diesel locomotives of 900 hp

25 main line electric locomotives

10 diesel shunting locomotives

30 suburban trains

39 diesel railcars and 15 trailers

180 steam locomotives

3,000 goods wagons

Included in the major works was the duplication and electrification of the Traralgon line, duplication of Heyington - East Malven line, additional tracks between Burnley

and Camberwell and between Caulfield and Moorabin. There were also additional tracks between South Yarra and Richmond. Richmond station was to be redesigned to accommodate 10 tracks. Coupled with other major projects of more recent date, such as the Melbourne Yard rework in 1965 (the Hump Yard) and the Underground Loop it makes Bracksy's Fast Rail Project look like a speck of fly shit!.



**Bob Bassett**  
**Sub Branch Secretary**  
**Western/Northern**  
**Regions.**